3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

prolonged if even one boy fails to recover. One of the two youths interrogated said that in his camp there were seventy-eight boys, three of whom died. My other informant said that in his camp there were sixty-eight boys, only one of whom died. The informants agreed that the deaths were due to an epidemic of influenza and not to privations or septic conditions arising from the operation. 881

During the period of seclusion the boys are taught songs and dances used at the ceremony that celebrates the conclusion of their initiation. By privation the boys are taught the value of food and fire. Novices are beaten if they show any disrespect for their guardians, and trifling offences are severely punished. Every boy has to take from the fire a burning stick, which he holds in his hand while running between two lines of men who beat him, and if he drops the stick he has to start his run once more. The boys swear allegiance to one another. A novice thinks that he will die if he gives information to a woman or to a man who has not been initiated.

From his mother, each boy receives food in a gourd which he deposits on the bank of a river near the novices' camp. If a boy dies, a hole is bored in the gourd so that when the mother receives this she will not send more food. Each guardian has a stick which is sent to the mother of his pupil when the ceremony of initiation and seclusion is ended. If the boy has died, bark is cut from both ends of the stick before this symbol of death is sent to his parents. 763 881

When the boys come out from their camp at the conclusion of the rites one man and one woman stand on the bank of the river, and the boys pass under the legs of both the man and the woman. When the boys arrive at the village the whole population comes out to welcome them. There is a feast and beer-drinking bout on the day of return. 881

During seclusion no water is allowed for washing, and the informants laughed as they spoke of the order "wash hands," whereupon the boys merely rubbed their hands together. When the order, "wash dishes," was given the boys rubbed their platters with their hands. On the day of leaving camp the novices bathe in the river. Ablution consists of three dips, after each of which the boy stands on the bank until he is dry. [515]

For two months the boys wear strips of bark cloth. During this period all the novices must move together, but there is no objection to their leaving the village provided they do so all in one company. While wearing bark cloth the boys have each day to attend a cere- [292]

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

KINGS AND CHIEFS

A chief (village headman) is buried in a specially constructed enclosure in the village over which he ruled (Plate XLV, Fig. 2). The mausoleum is a small hut with a substantial wooden door which is surrounded by a strongly built wooden fence ten feet high. 766 643

I was taken inside a tomb in the capital of Ngalangi, where the king showed the interior of his burial place of kinga. There were four mounds of earth, each of which covered the body of a king, and a little distance away were the graves of the principal wives. The hut contained pottery and gourds; also a small fire, which is replenished by an attendant who must not allow it to be extinguished.

Ngonga says that the burial chamber at Elende contains the head of the chief in a box. After one year from the time of burial the box containing the head is opened in order that a libation of beer may be poured over it. Sometimes the head is anointed with palm oil and a new band of cloth is added. These attentions are paid to the head in time of sickness and drought. If the head shows signs of desiccation an ox is killed in order to provide a new piece of skin in which the head is sewn. The tomb is visited by men who come to ask for good fortune when they are departing for a journey to the interior, and these supplicants are led to the tomb by the ruling chief. Near the burial place of the *sekulu* ("village headman") at Elende there was the house of bows (Plate XLVI, Fig. 1), which is typical of several seen in different parts of Angola. These repositories always contain staffs, bows, arrows, sleeping mats, and possibly other articles which belonged to the dead. 769 643 769

The corpse of a king is suspended from the top of the burial hut by a rope which is tightly fastened round his neck. That the king has died is not admitted and the announcement states that "the king has a cold in his head." The head of a specially selected family twists the rope until the head is severed. The twisting is carried out gradually, a little each day, so that a week or more is required for severance. In former times the head was detached by twisting only, but at present a knife is used to hasten the friction of the rope. When the body of the king has fallen into the basket placed underneath to receive it, the people may say that the king is dead and mourning begins. 766 [763] 643

Judging by the arrangement seen at the *ombala* of Ngalangi the bodies are buried in a hut constructed as a burial place for kings, but Ngonga states that the older method was cave burial. The body

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In the previous

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chapter I have indicated that the position of headman is today a somewhat shadowy one, and that the headman emerges rather than succeeds by virtue of various grounds; the main ones being official recognition, some tie to the local chief, the presence of a core of one's kinsmen, a claim to be the first resident, and personality. During my stay Sapapula was as much a headman of Epalanga as anyone can reasonably be these days, yet his position had not always gone unchallenged.

In 1954 he had found himself in danger of being displaced by his matrilateral 'brother' Mwehombo. Both men, apparently, claimed that they had founded the village, both had substantial cores of kinsfolk in the village, and both possessed strong personalities. Sapapula by holding the ministerial title of Epalanga to Kafelo had had a stronger position in village affairs. This prop to his power was taken away when Kafelo was deposed from the chiefdom, and Luanga and Mwehombo purchased the title of Epalanga from Lusase.

In this partnership Mwehombo must have been the leading personality, Luanga being extremely amiable but not at all domineering or energetic. Mwehombo's idea was presumably to establish himself as recognized headman of Epalanga, and to obtain whatever advantages were to be gained from an association with Lusase. Luanga's aim, from what he told me, was to escape contract labour by having a position as a traditional headman and title-holder. Titles will still be sought after, although the substance of power has gone, so long as they can confer some prestige or protection from administrative labour demands. It was not customary for the role of Epalanga to be held by two people jointly.

Mwehombo died shortly after this. He had been baptized by the name of Simon when dying on January 13th 1955, when his social personality began its posthumous career. At the inquest, which was held according to the old Umbundu pattern in which the corpse suspended in a hammock from a pole held by two men was supposed to answer questions by the way it swung, it was found that Mwehombo had suffered the proverbial fate of the sorcerer in being killed by the spirit he had used to kill others.

The role of the questioner was taken by Paulo, sister's son to

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763 Mwehombo, and elder of the school, a post he would certainly have lost had this come to the ears of the missionaries. Attitudes to the verdict are interesting. Sapapula assured me that [754] Mwehombo had killed many people by sorcery both sons and sisters' sons; Luanga did not see the contradiction which I pointed out to him of his saying both that Mwehombo was good and that he had practised sorcery; Gonçalve, Mwehombo's son, appeared sceptical of the verdict, as did Aspirante, Sapapula's sister's son who was married to a daughter of Mwehombo's half-brother, Wayangu.

764 The verdict did not prevent Mwehombo having an impressive funeral. He was buried according to his wishes in the traditional hammock placed in the circular grave, instead of the modern coffin placed in the modern oblong grave. As a caravan-leader he was buried by the track to Chicunda at the point where the path to Epalanga branched off. A low thatched [237] covering was erected over his grave with the horns of the beast killed at the funeral on it. In 1956 Gonçalve and Pedro Nendi, son of Mbati and therefore a cross-cousin of Mwehombo, replaced this by a concrete memorial in the form of a cross with the base inscribed in Portuguese 'Simon Mwehombo Native of Gumba Great Man died 13th January 1955.'

797 Thus Mwehombo had twice undergone conversion from pagan to Christian, once as he lay dying and once after death. 754 His posthumous conviction for sorcery affected neither the form of funeral, nor the continued residence of his kin in the village. His conviction for sorcery was a reflection of the social strains in which he had been involved, not the opening of another cycle 621 of conflict. The kinship cores are not segments opposing one 571 another as in a lineage system; they possess no clearly defined boundaries[10] or continuing existence in time. Their existence is dependent on the persons around whom the cores have formed, and on their deaths they lack any integrating principles. Mwehombo dead, his kinsfolk mostly found no objection in continuing to live in the village where his rival now lived as undisputed traditional headman.

621 There is no word in Umbundu for these groupings. The

[10] For example I have included José in the Mwehombo-Mbati kinship core, on the basis of association, but he came to the village through a tie with Sapapula.